



# WEIGHT LOSS FOR BUSY PHYSICIANS

— with Katrina Ubell, MD —

Katrina Ubell: Hey, my friend. How are you? Welcome to the podcast. Super excited to have you here with me again today. Love doing these podcasts for you.

All right. So, let's talk about how we define progress and success. I recently was coaching and just talking with some of my clients, and I realized that there was a bit of a struggle here. So, all of you who are working with me right now, make sure you are listening, for sure, and the rest of you, as well. Because, here's the thing, we really struggle with success. We start something, like in this case, my clients start my coaching group with me. And they have an idea in their heads of what success will be. How will they know if they are successful? And pretty much exclusively, it's that they want to see a certain number on the scale. And they will only feel like they are progressing if they are moving gradually and steadily forward toward that number on the scale. And that's how they have defined success for themselves.

So, they'll say to me when it's closer toward the end of our six months together, "I just thought I would have progressed further by this point. I just thought that I would have been more successful." And what I find that's so interesting is, you will have a client who has done the most amazing work on their brain, and their mind, and their experience of their lives, and their need to overeat and possibly over drink, and all of that. Their whole life is completely changed for the better. But they're like, "I just thought I would be 10 pounds lower by now." They're so disappointed, right, because of the way that they define success for themselves.

And I realize, okay, we need to talk about this. Because this is something I see time and again. And it really is something that we do unintentionally to ourselves, that basically, cuts us off at the ankles. It really makes us not see the incredible success that we have been having, and then we deprive ourselves of the positive emotions that we could be experiencing that will then fuel our desire to continue taking action to get whatever that number is that we want. So, they've done lots of work on themselves, and then they say they aren't making progress, right? It's like, is that really the way we want to define progress?

So, I thought to myself, "Let's just look up in the dictionary, checked out Merriam-Webster, what does the word success and what does the word progress actually mean? What's the definition? The definition of success is, "A favorable or desired outcome," right? Pretty simple. There is a certain outcome that you want, and it's desired and favorable, right?"

That's it. Progress is defined as, "A forward or onward movement as to an objective or to a goal." And then one of those sub definitions was, "Gradual betterment." And I thought that was a good one. Gradual betterment, right? Just continuing to improve, continuing to get better.

So, here's the thing, though, with weight loss. Like I said, we tend to focus on one outcome, just that one number on the scale. And then that's how we define success. "I want to get to 135 pounds. And I will know I'm successful if my body weighs 135 pounds." And it's so interesting. We are then, defining our entire experience of losing weight, and we're pinning it all on something that's really, overall, so irrelevant, ultimately. Really think about that. It's like, that really is how we want to define success? So, what we're doing, then, is we are not factoring in the evolution of what's happening in our brains and in our experience of our lives. We are not taking into account that there's lots and lots of positive changes that are happening. We are not even putting those in the success category. We are just like, "Oh, those are just some things that happened," as though that's not important.

And we think we are only making progress if we are losing weight consistently and quickly, right? That's the classic, like, "Well, I've been following my plan for a week. Why haven't I lost nine pounds? That's the only way I'm gonna know I'm making progress. I have all this weight to lose. It needs to come off right away." When what we have to do is really focus on our brains. So, ultimately, think about this. Who defines whether we're successful at something, or making progress towards something, or not? There's no success police out there. I mean, just the own judgment you have in your mind is the success police. There's no success police out there saying, "Oh, you thought you were successful. Actually, you're not." So, we are the ones who determine whether we are successful and making progress or not, by how we set up the rules for ourselves in our heads. And this is gonna be different for everybody.

But we basically, have these rules that we've usually created a bit out of thin air. They are not based in anything really, that rational. Almost nobody's sitting down and going, "Okay, this is how I'm truly gonna define it. I'm gonna look at all these different factors. I need to have a couple of these factors in play for me to feel like I believe that I'm making progress or that I'm being successful." We don't deliberately evaluate these rules, we don't reevaluate them, and in doing so we don't set ourselves up for success. In fact, we make it even harder for us to feel successful, right, because of our thinking. So, what makes you feel a feeling is always your thoughts, not what a number is on a scale. The number on the scale is a neutral fact. It is a circumstance.

So, how do we feel successful? Not by seeing a chart of weights that goes down in a consistent manner. What makes us feel successful is our thinking. So then, how do we decide to think we are being successful? This is what I find from a lot of my clients, is, they're, "I don't want to just feel like I'm successful if I'm not actually successful." Right? This is the classic doctor hold ourselves to this super-high standard. It's like, "No, but I have to be doing really, really amazingly in order for me to feel successful." Or for some of us, we set it up so that basically, it doesn't matter what we do we won't feel successful, because we don't feel deserving of that success.

We think that always somebody else is doing it better than us, or there's some way that we've been not performing up to par that we should be doing better in some way, right? It's like, where you've done a million great things, but your brain's like, "Yeah, but there's that one thing." And you're like, "Seriously? Can I just not enjoy this?" And you can't enjoy it if you have rules set up in your head that make it so that it's incredibly difficult for you to interpret what's happening as you achieve success. Because success really is an interpretation. It's just your thought about what is actually happening.

So, I want to offer to you some other ways to define success and progress in relation to weight loss. Now, this can also apply to success in other ways. I have many clients who feel like they're not successful in their relationships, particularly with their children, or with their spouses, or with some other relationship. A lot of doctors feel like they are not successful, in terms of how they are doing at work. They have lots and lots of rules in place, like they have to never make a mistake, always know the answer, never have anybody mad at them, always run on time. And then if that happens, then they can feel like a successful doctor. And of course, that never is going to be the case. So, at least not 100% of the time. So then, they can never feel like a success.

And then we wonder why we're so burned out, as doctors. It's like, when your brain is setting it up so that you are always feeling like you're coming up short, it's exhausting, right? And you try harder. But you're always coming up short. Of course you're going to end up burned out. At a certain point, it's just like, what is that Greek myth, where it's pushing the stone, the huge rock up to the top of the hill only right at the top, it rolls back down. You have to start over again, and that's you in eternity. That's basically what you're setting yourself up for, here.

So, other ways that you can define success or progress. So, here's some examples. You can plan your food every day, and then eat only and exactly that. You could define that as you being successful, you making progress. You can say, "even if I don't lose any weight for the next month, as long as I'm planning my food every day, and as long as I'm eating only and exactly that, I am killing it. I am absolutely successful and absolutely making progress." It's taking a lot of the drama out of it. We're understanding that that habit, that behavior alone, will eventually create the number on the scale. Maybe, if you don't lose weight for a month, it means that you have to make a few adjustments or modifications. But if you continue doing this action, you will eventually get that result that you're wanting.

Other ways to define success and progress. Doing thought to work every day, even when you're busy, and you don't feel like it. Especially when you're busy and you don't feel like it, is when you should be doing it. And so many of my clients ... and this is me included, we're just like, "I can kind of do it in my head. I'm sort of doing it, but I still have a lot of resistance to actually sitting down and writing it. I don't really like handwriting, and I don't want to be typing anymore than I already do. And I just hate the idea of a diary or journaling. It just seems so hard, and I just don't really want to do it." So then, you can define success as, "I do it every day for five minutes, even when it's the last thing I feel like doing. No matter what, I will empty out my thoughts on a piece of paper for five minutes. That, I will do."

And then you do that. And then, every day you're a success. Every day you're making progress at figuring out what's going on in your brain, so that you can create a brain that doesn't use food to make yourself feel better anymore. See that? Within my program, showing up for a coaching call can be defined as success or progress. Or listening to a recording of a call. Just knowing that you're showing up in the program. Maybe that's taking in some of the other content, or reading some coaching questions. Showing up every day, doing something in the program every day, absolutely that can be a definition of success and of progress for you.

Listening to a podcast. And then not just passively consuming the information, but taking some notes on the top three lessons you learned, and how you're going to apply those lessons to your life. That, for sure, can be a definition of success and of progress. "I'm actually taking this information, I'm taking the time to learn things that are gonna help me to do better and be a better person and enjoy my life more. And then I'm not just gonna allow my brain to forget them. I'm going to actually solidify them. I'm going to remind myself of these lessons, and figure out a way to incorporate them into what I'm already doing." That's for sure progress, definitely.

Another way is by getting right back on track again if you make a mistake and eat off your plan. So many of us, we make a mistake, something happens for whatever reason, doesn't matter why. You're not eating the way that you should be or wanted to be eating, or had planned for or not planned for, thought you would do. And it's so easy to then, continue on with that. "Well, I already screwed the day up, so I might as well make it count now." And then the next day, "Well, I mean, it's just one more day. What's the big deal?" And then before you know it, you've gained all the weight back. So, you make a mistake, and you get right back on track again. Even though your brain is like, "Hey, we could be doing all this fun stuff. Look at all this other food we can eat. Are you sure you don't want to just have some of that ice cream before you get back on track and you're not eating it again?"

I mean, your brain will be very savvy. It will be very enticing. It's like the sirens. Not quite, though. You know what I mean, the sirens that would lure the male ocean goers, and they would make their boats crash, right? But it really is something that you have to just decide, "No, every time I get back on track again right after I've made a mistake, that means that I'm making progress. I'm making so much progress. I'm being so successful in getting right back on track again." And that's amazing. That is nothing to scoff at. I'm telling you, that is a huge accomplishment, big time.

Another way to define success is persevering no matter how many times you make a mistake, right? Then there's people who are like, "No, but seriously, four times this week, I went off plan." Okay, that's fine. But if you're here asking for help, you're still trying to figure this out, you are definitely succeeding. You are definitely progressing. Because the people who aren't progressing and who aren't succeeding have long gone, they are long gone. They've long ago completely just dropped off the face of the earth. We don't hear from them anymore. So, the fact that you're even asking for help, engaging, showing up, wanting to improve, that's for sure progress. And that's not just me being all Pollyanna. It's just as true as you believing that you suck.

So, we often will sit here and look at this. We're like, "No, the only way to look at it is that I'm completely messing this up." You will create such a negative experience, right? You won't continue. You won't keep doing what you need to be doing, which is persevering.

It's so common for us to think, "No, it's this way." And then when someone offers us another way of thinking about it that's just as true and just as likely, our brains are like, "Nope, nope, nope." Somehow, offering ourselves a little bit of softness, a little bit of slack, a little bit of love, we don't deserve it. It's somehow going to turn us into someone who's complacent, and never tries to achieve anything else. But in fact, what's true is the opposite. You become complacent when you feel like you can't ever succeed, when you can't ever win. No matter what you do it's never good enough. Then why wouldn't you just eat whatever you want, and just deal with the weight gain? See what I'm saying?

Another way to define success and progress is refusing to quit. Just saying, "No matter what, I'm going to figure this out. I will figure this out. Even when I get sidetracked, even when I take a massive detour, as long as I refuse to quit, then I am succeeding." I mean, that alone, it's like, "Okay, great, I'm already succeeding. Now that I'm succeeding, what else am I gonna do? How else am I gonna succeed?" It gives you this forward momentum that helps to move you in that right direction toward getting that ultimate number that you want on the scale.

Another way to define success is only accepting patience with the process. Not letting yourself get frustrated, not allowing yourself to have the pity party and think that it should be going faster when it's not. So when you are going through the process and having patience for yourself, allowing yourself to make those mistakes and learn from them and do better next time and keep practicing, you're for sure progressing. That's so, so, so, so important. So, what if thinking this way feels like lowering your expectations, though, not striving for excellence? There's so many physicians who have this way of thinking. They're like, "Ah, it just feels so icky. No. I am someone who's an, not even just an A+ student, time and A+++++ student," right?

But here's the thing about excellence. The same thing goes for determining what qualifies as excellence. Meaning, you can excel at refusing to quit. You can excel at generating the thoughts and feelings that serve you. You can excel at planning your food super-efficient and easy, so that following your plan is totally automatic and a complete no-brainer. So, you also can define excellence in a way that's achievable, rather than this gold ring that's dangling out there that you're never going to reach.

So, here's the thing about success. If you define it based on a number on the scale, then you're not taking into account all of the behaviors and changes that you had to make to get there, or that you will have to make to get there. It's those behavior changes, including managing your mind so that you're thinking and feeling the way that serves you. So, when you carry these behavior changes out consistently, that's what results in you maintaining that number you want to see on the scale. Many of us are very good at getting to that goal weight, but we can't stay there for longer than half a second before we start gaining it all back again, because we don't have those behavior changes set in place. We don't even know what we need to do to be able to stay there, because we've been so focused on that number on the scale. This is what happens when you're allowing the number on the scale to determine and define your success.

So, if you're only focus on that number, you are missing out on figuring out all of the parts that create true long lasting success, which is maintenance, right? Maintaining your weight. You're placing all of the importance on the one thing that ultimately matters the least, right?

Because nobody's on their deathbed going, "Every day of my life, I weighed 135. My life is complete. Now I can die." Nobody is ever saying that, right? But what's required of you, the amount of growth and evolution that's required within you to become someone who's able to maintain their weight loss, that's what you want to focus on. That's what's most important. Otherwise, you're just completely focusing on the wrong stuff, and you will just continue to participate in this cycle of up and down, up and down, yo-yo dieting.

So, I want to encourage you to redefine what success looks like for you. Make it easy for you to believe you are succeeding. Not just like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, I'm succeeding," Truly believe it. Otherwise, you're always feeling like you're failing, which will ultimately lead to you quitting. And quitting is that ultimate failure. I'm gonna leave you with just a short little story about something that happened to me recently. And it really made me think about defining success. So, we have the most amazing dentist for our kids. It's called the Fun Kids Dentist, so shout out to them in Brookfield, Wisconsin. They are amazing. Literally, my children jump up and down for joy when I tell them we are going to the dentist.

For my daughter, for the girls, when they're done, they literally, paint their nails. I'm like, "Hello, what is happening? Why are there no spa services at my dentist? I'll get a pedi while I am getting my teeth cleaned. Are you kidding me?" That's so amazing. And they use that air blower tool that they have. They use that to dry it. It's so great. So anyway, I was bringing the kids to the dentist. Sometimes my husband brings them. And I think he brought them last time. So, we were walking in to the office building, and all of the sudden, I just had that thought of, "Oh, no, Matt told me last time I was supposed to set up a sealant appointment for my seven-year-old, and I never did that." I was like, "Oh, darn it. I totally forgot. I didn't do that, shoot. Okay. Well, I'll make sure I make the appointment this time. That way, I get it done. I'll just do it."

So, we're sitting there waiting. And hygienists, we've known them for years. They are also great, and such lovely people. And so the one for him, for that son, came out. And she was just asking, "Are there any problems with his teeth? Do you have any concerns?" And I said, "No, but hey listen, I know last time I was supposed to bring him in for sealants. And I didn't do it. But I promise I'm going to do it. I'm totally gonna do it." And she kind of looked at me sort of funny. And she opened up his chart and she looked. She was like, "No, you brought him in. He's had them done. He's had his sealants done." And I was like, "I did it?" Because here's the thing with multiple kids, I can't remember who I brought in. For sure, somebody's had sealants. But I don't remember who. And I was like, "Oh, my gosh, I did it? Look at me. I'm an amazing mom." I truly felt so successful. I was like, "Look at me. I totally got that done, and I don't even remember that I did it. How amazing am I? Pat on the back, sister. You've got this. You are killing it as a mom today."

That's totally, the way that you can approach something like this, where you're like, "Okay, I didn't remember. No big deal. But I'm successful if I forgot and I make sure I sign up for it that day and get him on the schedule. And I'm successful if I already did it and I don't remember." You can really, seriously choose this. And no one can tell you that you're not successful. Again, there's no success police. You get to decide this.

So, why not choose to define success for yourself and progress in a way that drives you forward, that makes you want to continue doing the work that you're doing to improve yourself? I mean, it's a no-brainer, right? Of course, you want to do it that way. But first, you have to spend time looking at what those rules are for yourself right now, how you're setting yourself up to not succeed, to understand how you need to redefine that and reassess what success really means for you.

Such good work. Absolutely amazing. I will see you next week. Have an awesome rest of your week. Take care.